

LORD MACAULAY;

AN ESSAY,

READ BEFORE

The Dublin Young Men's Christian Association

IN CONNEXION WITH

THE UNITED CHURCH OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND.

BY

THOMAS TEIGNMOUTH SHORE, A.B.,

TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

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LORD MACAULAY.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY—Poet, Orator, Essayist and Historian—was born at Rothley Temple, Leicestershire, on the 25th of October, 1800. His Father, Zachary Macaulay, Esq., was one who was well known as an active member of that class of philanthropists which the names of Clarkson, Buxton and Wilberforce adorn. He married a Miss Sarah Mills, who had been a favorite pupil of Hannah More. Young Macaulay was educated at home, chiefly by his mother, for the first thirteen years of his life; and no doubt Hannah More took no small interest in the welfare of her former pupil's child. This we very reasonably conclude from a letter dated August the 7th, 1812, written from Barley Wood, near Bristol, in which she recommends Mr. Macaulay to place his son as a day scholar at Westminster. In this letter she speaks of him as “no vulgar boy”—she never “saw any one bad propensity in him; nothing except natural frailty, inseparable perhaps from such talents and so lively an imagination: he appears sincere, veracious, tender hearted and affectionate.” Here we have an estimate of young Macaulay when he was but eleven years old—an estimate formed by one, who though then nearly seventy years of age, was well qualified to judge of character—one who had herself already won an immortal

celebrity; who had lived in a great grand period of our literary history—the intimate of Burke, of Walpole, of Johnson, and of Garrick.

Notwithstanding her advice, he was not sent to Westminster; the school of Ben Johnson, Cowley, Herbert, Dryden and Cowper, was not destined to add the name of Macaulay to the list of her distinguished alumni. He went to a private academy, conducted by the Rev. M. Preston, at Shelford, near Cambridge: while here he paid more than one visit to Hannah More. She describes him as always reciting poetry, and expressed herself “astonished at the quantity of learning Tom has poured in.” He wrote at this time a little poem—“Clodpole and the Quack Doctor”—which Mrs. More describes as “really good.” ’Tis said, the child is father to the man; and so it was particularly in the case of Macaulay; we who have lived to see the close of his brilliant career, and can look back upon the vast results of his prodigious energy, stretching back in a kind of inverted perspective, we can turn to the records of this period of his life with an indescribable pleasure; how he must have listened with rapture to Hannah More’s account of those great giants of literature amongst whom she had lived—the intrigues of Mrs. Piozzi, the pomposity of Johnson, the brilliancy of Garrick, the adulation of Boswell, all the greatness—all the brilliancy of a period which in her person was connected with the present. Yes! when we are reading some of Macaulay’s grand elaborate essays—when he alludes to men of the Johnsonian era, our minds are carried back to the happy days he spent at Barley Wood, where the gentle and pious hostess prayed in the little room with the latticed window, for the success of him—the eldest son of her former pupil.

In October, 1818, he entered Trinity College, Cambridge—the college where his tutor had been educated. He was not long at the University when he became well known. He

applied himself to the improvement of his oratorical powers, at the same time not forgetting the ballad poetry, biography, and history that had been the favorite companions of his earlier days.

We are not writing a biography of, but an essay on Lord Macaulay—otherwise we might have followed his brilliant career, step by step—a career more than once checked by sudden revulsions of fortune, directed from an earlier period by a decided antagonism to aristocratic principles and Tory politics. We cannot, however, pass over this period of his life, without referring to a document, which we have before us. It is a letter dated from Newcastle, on March 10th, 1823. It bears no less distinguished a signature than “Henry Brougham.” It was written to Zachary Macaulay, as Mr. Brougham says, “In consequence of some conversation I have just had with Lord Grey, who has spoken of your son (at Cambridge) in terms of the greatest praise.” He then proceeds to give him such advice as he believes would prove useful to one who desired to become a great orator. What then was this advice? What the plan proposed by a great orator to a young man, who afterwards became one of the most successful and distinguished speakers that has, during this century, adorned the House of Commons? The first requisite he enjoins is the acquirement of a habit of easy speaking. “This is to eloquence, or good public speaking, “what the being able to talk in a child is to correct grammatical speech. It is the requisite foundation—and on it you “must build; moreover, it can only be acquired young; “therefore, let it by all means, and at any sacrifice, be gotten “hold of forthwith.” The next step, he then proceeds to say, “is the grand one; to convert this style of easy speaking into chaste eloquence.” For this purpose he entreats young Macaulay to lay before him daily and nightly the Greek models; he gives a list of modern speeches into which he recommends

him to look, and concludes with a reference to his own experience—a passage so valuable that we cannot forbear quoting it. “I use a very poor instance in giving my own experience; but I do assure you, that both in courts of law and Parliament, and even to mobs, I have never made so much play (to use a very modern phrase), as when I was almost translating from the Greek. I composed the peroration of my speech for the Queen, in the Lords, after reading and repeating Demosthenes for three or four weeks; and I composed it twenty times over at least; and it certainly succeeded in a very extraordinary degree, and far above any merits of its own. This leads me to remark, that though speaking without writing beforehand is very well until the habit of easy speech is acquired, yet after that he can never write too much; this is quite clear. It is laborious no doubt, and it is more difficult beyond comparison than speaking offhand; but it is necessary to perfect oratory, and at any rate it is necessary to acquire the habit of correct diction. But I go farther, and say, even to the end of a man’s life, he must prepare word for word most of his finer passages.

Such was the advice given by Mr. Brougham to Mr. Macaulay when he had just completed his University studies. It would be absurd for us to attempt a commentary upon it; that it bears the signature of Henry Brougham, gives it a sufficient claim to the careful study of every one who desires to pursue a public and an useful career. The advice is invaluable—it was followed by young Macaulay, and we know the results. Lord Brougham is still alive—possessed of a vigour of intellect which is truly astonishing. He to whom the advice was given has been laid in Westminster Abbey,—more romantic this than romance itself. The “old man eloquent” has lived to see completed the distinguished career of one to whom in his early years he had given this sound and sage advice.

Upon Lord Macaulay as an orator and a statesman we shall not say much: we have heard him speak, and with diligence have perused all his published speeches—so that on his character as an orator we may venture an opinion. It would, however, in an essay like this, be quite impossible to enter into an examination of the political principles which he advocated, or to analyze the soundness of those theories which he defended with such brilliancy and power. He had “that knowledge of the past, combined with that sympathy for the present,” which enabled him to deliver speeches agreeable, historic, reasonable. His first public appearance was at an Anti-slavery meeting—and his early convictions on that subject may be traced easily in different parts of his subsequent career—even when the subject in hand had no reference to the African. The moral convictions which he early inherited gave a vivifying power to what otherwise might have been a mere intellectual effort, or the forensic genius of a special pleader. His accent and delivery were not perhaps what are generally termed popular, yet he never addressed a thin house. As soon as it became known that Macaulay was speaking, there was a rush of members from the lobbies and Coffee-rooms, and they listened eagerly, for they knew right well that no matter how confused the topic, or how discursive the debate had been, that he would present it intelligibly to their minds. He stated his case; he argued its principles; he ventilated the facts; showed it in every favourable light—illustrating his statements as he proceeded, by that gigantic knowledge of history which he possessed. Not rich perhaps in invention, but ingenious in application, he poured a flood of light on whatever question was before the house. His speech defending the privilege of the Master of the Rolls to sit in the House of Commons was one of the latest. It was a subject well suited to Macaulay—and as regards the gain-

ing of votes, it is almost without a parallel in Parliamentary History.

He was indeed a vigorous—terse after a manner—and brilliant orator. It is of no small importance to bear this in mind—lest we might for one moment imagine that he became an author because he had failed as a politician. Nothing of the kind. No doubt the various questions which came on for discussion about the year 1848 were not so well suited to Macaulay, as the questions which had been at issue some time previously, when he was the recognised representative of the opinions of a large class in the country, but this detracts nothing from his fame as a public speaker; he only wrote in order that his vast knowledge and ready ability might be more permanently and generally useful: as an orator he had fulfilled all that he believed there was a necessity of accomplishing. How complete, individually as well as collectively, were all his speeches! He left no undeveloped germs of thought to be spun out into an inflated newspaper article. The Press might criticise what he said, and how he said it, but they could not attempt to dilute the strong essence of his manly thought with the weak infusion of their own, and give the entire to the public as an original production. Politics and oratory are nearly allied—and when we speak of the one, we closely tread on the other. But we forbear. “In politics you should always leave a bone to pick to the snarlers,” says M. Joubert. We have no wish to be put in the category there referred to; and while we admit our dissent from the views which Lord Macaulay entertained upon many political questions, we will not delay to enter into a dissertation concerning the purity of his political creed, but content ourselves with placing him in the list of the most powerful and distinguished orators who have adorned St. Stephen’s during the present century.

As a poet, Lord Macaulay cannot occupy any very exalted

position. He was a poet of a peculiar stamp, not a poet in the highest and noblest sense of the term; but yet he possessed more than the mere mechanical power of versification. He was not a common rhymers, and yet we doubt if he could have written anything well, of an higher order than the Historical Ballad; these, however, he wrote with a brilliancy and a power which has perhaps never been equalled, certainly not excelled. We need not here enter into the very interesting question of Ballad Poetry. We must however remark that when he produced *Virginia* as a poem, which, from internal evidence, must have been the effusion of a plebeian—of one who hated the proud tyrants who had long governed Rome, loving tyranny so ardently, that every attempt at the regeneration of the country was utterly futile, he fell into an error as regards the selection of the subject. Such a poem would not have been the kind that the aristocrats of a latter date would choose to be recited at their banquets. There may have been a little mistake then in his choosing this topic and style of *Virginia*, as a specimen of Roman Ballad Poetry, when we know that they were generally approved of by the rich and enjoyed at their tables. We pass over a few trivial errors of this kind. The poetry of Macaulay is good—the style well suited to the event. Of his Ballads, *The Battle of Lake Regillus* is generally considered his best—we prefer *Horatius Cocles*. The event is a grand and patriotic one; told in a spirit stirring metre. In no language, and in no descriptive verse perhaps, could we find anything more poetically eloquent than the simple record of the reward which the Roman people bestowed upon the brave *Horatius*. But Macaulay's fame must not be rested on his poetry. If he had been only a poet, and had only given such productions to the world as we now possess in his volume of poems, his fame would never have been so exalted nor so extended as it is.

It is not to the manner in which he wrote, but to the class of poetry that he composed that we refer. In a great and

true poet the *ideal* is just as important and requisite as the mere power of rhyming—indeed much more so. As in painting, so in poetry. The ideal is the *sine qua non* of the highest type. A mere historic painter bears the same relation to Ary Scheffer that Macaulay does to Dryden or to Tennyson. Of living writers, Mr. Thackeray possesses this power of rhyming perhaps to a greater extent than Lord Macaulay—he has all the mechanical parts of poetry in perfection, but this is no claim to the title of poet: the poetry consists more in the beauty of the ideal, and the simplicity of expression, than in the rhythmical jingle of the lines. It was as a prose writer that Macaulay excelled; and when we mention his name we are reminded of the orator, essayist, and historian, rather than of the poet. His Essays, Historical and Critical, have been read by every educated man. Works of that stamp were never so popular before—and they were not popular because of the subjects to which they referred, but because of the manner in which those subjects were treated. Mill, Orme and Elphinstone had endeavoured to give the people of England some knowledge of that Eastern portion of the British dominions, with its populations of teeming millions—in ignorance the people yet remained. The genius, however, that portrayed to us the Court of Charles the Second has made us acquainted with all the Rajahs and Zenanas of the East. His Essays on Clive and Warren Hastings are particular records; and joined together they give us a great knowledge of the history of India. Before, that history had been dull—the records of speculating merchants, who were intriguing in a far off land, had no interests for us; but now, in these essays, all is changed, and the accounts of her vicissitudes are as varied and as brilliant as the luxurious foliage which the fertility of her soil produces. We cannot go through all his Essays seriatim. We have his Essays on Byron, Addison, Madame D'Arblay, all surpassingly beautiful. His portraiture of Bur-

leigh, Walpole and Chatham all photographically true. One of his earliest essays was a review of Machiavelli; and it will ever be considered one of the best. In it he speaks out his principles with a manly vigor, from which, in after years, expediency might have deterred him. His Historical Essays are undoubtedly the best. The trial scene in "Warren Hastings" is grand beyond description. As a descriptive piece of composition it is amongst the finest productions of Lord Macaulay. We see nothing of the author breaking out in these essays—nothing like the egotism of Byron or Rosseau; and yet no callousness—no indifference to the subject. His pulse seems to beat with every word he wrote, and from his pen seemed to flow the very life-blood of his sympathy. These essays are written as reviews of current literature; they are not, however, critiques in the common sense of that term. The name of the book which he sets himself down to review is merely a peg whereon to hang his own biographical essay. We do not mean to deny that Macaulay was a critic; he was a peculiar and a powerful one. He would not analyze the character of a book, dissecting it with the keen edge of a Dickens, or the scrutinizing intensity of a Thackeray; but he will place it in a proper light—he will paint the character of the man, and all the important events in his career, as brilliantly as the pencil of Watteau; so true and so faithfully, generally, that you discover alike his virtues and his faults. And so, when he takes a biography as the subject for his criticism, we find, not an analysis of what *has been written*, but a record of what *should have been written*. He gives you an original work—he gives his own account, and then invites you to an inspection and comparison of both. But Lord Macaulay has written some short biographies not intended as reviews; and a volume of these, published by Mr. Black, are amongst some of the very best and most interesting of Macaulay's writings. They are gems

of history. Some of the men lived during that remarkable age over which the genius of Macaulay had shed so brilliant a lustre—others at a latter date. These latter are the most valuable : they give us a glimpse into the rich storehouse to which Macaulay would have had recourse had he lived to complete his great historic work. First, we have Francis Atterbury, who was made a bishop, because he was so bad a dean—the great Tory doctor who with his tyranny nearly ruined his Tory college. Atterbury was, after a fashion, a consistent Tory as long as Whigs opposed him. He defended a spurious book because his own party were the authors ; and fought the episcopal bench because he was himself simply a priest. He offered to consecrate James the Third as the Lord's Anointed, and swore allegiance to the House of Hanover. His writings and political career are brought before us so graphically—with such truth and force by Macaulay, that we almost involuntarily say “amen,” to the statement that “some of his books were good by reason of their exceeding badness ;” and we can almost hear the tender and solemn tone in which he read the burial service over Addison in the chapel of Henry the Seventh.

From the Right Reverend Atterbury we come to John Bunyan the tinker. We have Bunyan under all the fears of religious excitement beholding in a vision all the terrors of a world unseen : we have him then serving in the ranks of Cromwell's Ironsides, where he met those great characters which he afterwards transferred to his religious drama. The Scripture names which Scott and others tell us were common amongst the soldiers of the Parliament, may have suggested to Bunyan a further development of the application. Equally with Lord Macaulay do we lament that such a man as this should be locked up in Bedford jail ; but we cannot see how it can be deduced from this, as a general principle, that one

is "obeying God rather than man" by refusing, in a matter *where no sin was involved*, to obey the powers that be.

From the history of the great allegorist we glide into the life of Oliver Goldsmith. His conduct in this University, pumping the police, and giving entertainments in his rooms to fair damsels from the town—his penniless wanderings on the continent—his literary pursuits—his pure and easy style, sometimes pointed and energetic—his amusing narratives—his picturesque descriptions—his rich and joyous humour, and the amiable sadness which pervades such compositions as "The Deserted Village." Such the life, and such the character, of one of the most kind-hearted and talented men of his age. And when we read of a man like Goldsmith, whose life is in some respects a glaring contradiction, we are naturally led to inquire, had he lived now would he be appreciated? Have we a Burke that would weep, and a Reynolds that would fling aside his palette, when they heard the sad news of his death, and then follow his coffin to the grave?

Next the burly Doctor Johnson steps upon the scene, at a most important period in literary history, when the peers had ceased to patronise, and the booksellers had not yet commenced to pay. Macaulay tells us he was a Tory, "not from rational conviction, but from mere passion;" as a general rule we would be inclined to believe quite the reverse. Passion and excitement may, undirected by reason, lead to republican principles; they would scarcely be calculated to make us Tories. If reason do not interfere in the direction of our political creed, it is something of romance rather than passion that would guide us in the path of Conservatism. Of Dr. Johnson's writings few remain that we care for very much. It is rather the man than his literary productions that we value; and we do not believe with some, that the general admiration of Johnson was solely and entirely due to the high coloring of Boswell; there must have been something great,

something more than mere pomposity, in the man who could shine brightly in the presence of Gibbon, Goldsmith, Burke, Jones, and Garrick.

The life of William Pitt concludes the volume. It is one of the best, the least partial, and the most brilliant of Lord Macaulay's productions. Had he written in full the history of this era, what a volume would he have given to the world! The politics of the Stuarts were open, compared to the political schemes to which Parliamentary Government gave birth—we were curious to see how the great historian of the Revolution would deal with the intricate politics of later days, and we were not disappointed; Macaulay has discovered and pointed out accurately the error committed by Fox and North in forming a coalition. The head of the old Tory party formed a union with the leader of the Whigs and Dissenters, *before any of their followers coalesced*. This was their error, and Pitt's opportunity. The members left without a leader looked to him—they made him their chief; and when Fox and North resigned their seals, William Pitt became Prime Minister of England. Pitt did not, however, excel in the practical department of legislation; he knew nothing of finances, although he was Chancellor of Exchequer. He planned schemes in theory, of which he had not an idea as regards their execution. How then did such a man succeed, and have writ as his epitaph "the pilot that weathered the storm"? "Parliamentary government," says Lord Macaulay, "is government by speaking." The power of speaking is prized as the greatest quality of a politician. This power Pitt wielded with matchless skill and energy. Fox led the opposition, Burke and Sheridan were his lieutenants. But the taunting sarcasm of the leaders and the boundless imagination and brilliant eloquence of his allies, did not subdue the youthful Councillor of the King. The great Revolution in France had a powerful influence on the opinions of Pitt, and gave him a dread of revolutionary

principles, which Macaulay thinks unbecoming; we, however, can only consider them wholesome. It was not the natural bent of his feelings to check the growth of popular opinion. Thrice he introduced reform; and once he resigned because he could not carry Catholic Emancipation. For reform to be beneficial, he believed it should be gradual. He saw in France an ancient dynasty smitten and shattered by a stroke that resounded through the entire of Christendom. These volcanic eruptions of anarchy and of crime were thundering in his ears, and he knew full well that reform should not be nourished while all Europe seemed a hothouse, warmed by the fierce energy of the French Revolution.

From these Biographies we discern what we stated above, that had the historian lived, he would have proved equal to the great task which he had undertaken. And what was that task? To write a history of England from the time of the Revolution to a period within the memory of some still living. The task was not completed: he recorded the death of his great moral hero, and then he laid himself down to die. It was in his History that Macaulay had the grandest opportunity for displaying his dramatic powers; and no where is that power more extensively exercised than in the account of the fall of James. The scene opens with a king swaying an almost absolute sceptre; concludes with a wretched exile in the Court of St. Germain's. And in the interval, what a rich variety of dramatic personæ? What a never-ceasing shifting of the scenes? Here Macaulay has a happy method of altering the thread of his narrative, without wearying or confusing the reader. Fresh from Mr. Froude's history we read the history of Macaulay; and so we appreciated the difference of style. From one scene to another we are carried gently and imperceptibly in the volume of Macaulay, as the Genii used to transport people from one clime to another in the Arabian Nights; but when there is a change of scene in the pages of

Froude we are dragged most unceremoniously. We have said that Lord Macaulay's Biographies were history, we now invert the expression—Lord Macaulay's History was biography. It might, now that no more can be added, be styled "The life of the Prince of Orange." Much is told of what happened before his accession—this was necessary as an introduction; had we not discovered the pre-existing wounds in the body politic, we could not have fully appreciated the skill of the Dutch physician who healed them. Had we not known that men were hung or imprisoned for worshipping God after a simpler ritual than their king approved of, we would not have understood the blessings of the Toleration Act. Had we not followed Jeffrey's through his tour on "the Bloody Assizes," the great advantages of the Act, whereby their seats were secured to judges during life or good behaviour, would not have been so apparent. In reviewing Lord Macaulay's history, while we acknowledge his genius, and admire the boundless scope of his information, we cannot be blind to the prejudice which pervades the entire volume, the perversion of facts and the distortion of events, by which he deifies the Whigs and vilifies the Tories.

We have alluded to the graphic account which he gives of the change in the fortunes of James—was there no opportunity for such a masterpiece at the death of Charles? Self-willed and tyrannical, as Lord Macaulay makes him out, when alive, there was a mighty change when he for ever doffed the Garter and the George—changing "a mortal for an immortal crown." Yet how is the last scene described? What is the record of the *denouement*? A few commonplace words—"his head was severed from the body, before thousands of spectators, in front of the Banqueting House of Whitehall." Was the change from Sedgemoor and St. James to the Boyne and St. Germain's greater than from banqueting with courtiers and indulging in the royal pageantry of a palace, to receiving

the Sacrament and dying on the scaffold, a Christian and a gentleman? Or was there a greater opportunity for dramatic effect in recounting the wanderings of a royal exile on the Continent, than in describing the death of a royal martyr on the block? But we cannot think so. The fact is simply this,—Charles was a Tory; so was James. The one lived a bad man, and died a worse; as he grew old his iniquity increased. The other may have done wrong at the outset of his career, but as he lived he improved, and died in the spirit and with the resignation of a Christian. The one commenced his career surrounded with peers and courtiers, and died a lonely fugitive. The other spent his life with gay companions in the palace, or fighting his rebellious subjects in the field, but his last moments were engaged in holy communion with the saintly Juxon. Even though you may hate him, if you consider him a tyrant while he lived, yet, had Lord Macaulay adequately recorded the sad story of his fall, you must have shed a tear of sympathy for his sufferings. We could not read this portion—or indeed any portion of Macaulay's history—and remain ignorant of which side had enlisted his sympathies. But we do not mean to censure him for this. Even in this intensely Whig history, both sides occasionally are abused. The madness of the people concerning the Popish Plot, the Exclusion Bill, the assassination of Sharpe, the rabbling of the western clergy, are all condemned in turn. These however are artistic touches of exquisite beauty, where the historian attempts to dazzle the reader with his candour, his freedom from political bias, his impartiality. It must not however be supposed that our sympathies are with those who think that history best when we cannot discover what were the opinions of the author—or to what party he belonged. No! we dislike historical productions like those of M. Mignet and M. Comte. And we are ready to make every allowance for Lord Macaulay; and a great allowance must in all fairness

be made when we consider the period of which he wrote. When we have accurately studied the history of that era when the blood seemed to flow quick through men's veins as they trod the boards with passionate energy. We feel like the spectators at Salamis, whom the historian describes as harmonising the movements of their bodies, and the expression of their countenance to the varied issue of the contest; and if we, standing aloof, cannot restrain this sympathy, what would be the character of him, who, watching quite closely, sniffs the breeze of battle, and yet remains unsympathizing and callous. We attach no blame to the historian for the candid expression of his sympathy, provided he does not permit that sympathy to degenerate into favoritism. This is unfortunately the case with Lord Macaulay. We could pardon as a trivial error, an occasional preference; but preference is too easy a term for an uncompromising praise of Whigs and blame of Tories. The one he almost invariably blackens as political devils—the fame of the others he blanches into angelic purity. In candour we must, however, admit that occasionally Macaulay does say something against a Whig. His partiality is of a very peculiar kind, and very dexterously introduced. It is not to the good Tories and the good Whigs—or to the good of one class and the bad of another that he generally shows a partiality. But when we meet the bad Tory and the bad Whig—the worshipping of lawn sleeves and Royalty tends to aggravate the crime. We shall have occasion presently to refer to a very remarkable instance of this.

Macaulay has not, however, in estimating character, fallen into an error very common at the present day—of supposing that the giants of past ages were all good giants, when compared with the distinguished intimates of the historian. That error is very common with a certain class of writers, and we must confess that Macaulay's history tends greatly to

diminish it. Can any one read *Vanity Fair* and *Esmond* and not arrive at the very strange conclusion, that the present is an age of swindling, cheating, folly, and of nothing else; and that the days of old were the lifetime of good men and true? There is, however, an error nearly allied to this, into which Macaulay has fallen more than once, in judging of the man by the effects of his policy. "In a sense evil trees did then bring forth good fruit," says a modern writer. This is the whole secret—occasionally Macaulay sees the good fruit, but cannot discover the good tree—he then lops off the branches and neatly trims it, so that we may think the tree itself is good. Mr. Froude has likewise not escaped this error. He imagines that King Henry the Eighth was adorned with all the moral virtues, because his was the era of the Reformation; and so Lord Macaulay thinks with reference to the great constitutional Reformer of England. As regards the *moralé* of Englishmen at this period of Macaulay's writing, it is difficult to speak: when we come to look for one consistent unswerving course of conduct in the men of that era we are generally disappointed. It was remarkable for change of opinions and vacillation of policy. We see the great Parliamentary general welcoming the exiled monarch to the throne of his martyred father; and the Primate whom James persecuted is deprived of his see by William. This opinion of the great men of that period need not detract from their dignity of character. The storms blew violently in those days. As long as they came from one and the same direction, the same course of action might be pursued; but when the wind shifted, the sail should be accommodated to the change—not to do evil that good may come; but if consistency were observed, with reference to the end to be attained, there should be, and there must be a sacrifice of consistency in the means employed for obtaining the desired result.

The term inconsistency is often misapplied. It is not

inconsistent to act according to one rule this year, and according to some other next year. There may be good reason for the change; and to refuse a change, when a valid reason for such is given, is mere obstinacy and stubbornness, and should be censured. But inconsistency is the holding, or rather acting, according to different rules at the same time. Or if we hold one doctrine in theory, and act agreeably to another—in common *parlance*, not to practise what we preach, is inconsistent, and deserving of condemnation. The observance of these principles which we have laid down, will, in a great measure, account for the vacillating policy of many great men in the latter days of the Stuarts. They had a certain object in view: there were many means good in a greater or less degree, by which they could obtain that end. While the wind of court favour or popular frenzy blew in one quarter, one means might seem most advisable; when the direction of the wind altered, the advisability of the means altered likewise, while the object to be arrived at remained the same. We must then be very cautious when we apply the term inconsistent to any of the great men whom Macaulay has sketched. They were oftentimes consistent in keeping one goal in view; and only altered their *modus operandi* as circumstances compelled them. No doubt there were some inconsistent men then alive, who never opposed tyranny until they felt the iron entering their own soul; who were Whigs, because Whigs gave them “places,” and for “places” would have bartered their principles to the Tories. There is however a very great difference between those who changed their principles with every change of government, and those who altered their line of policy solely to preserve the integrity of their principles. We must make an observation on Lord Macaulay’s reasoning powers before we allude to any particular portions of his history. Speaking generally, we can scarcely discover anywhere a fallacy in his reasoning. To this broad assertion we must add a caution. He occasionally

makes statements which at first sight may be mistaken for arguments, but on a closer examination we discover that they are nothing more than an authoritative statement of opinion or of fact. He often lays down erroneous opinions or unproven facts, and argues from these as if they were correct, and so his conclusion, when arrived at, is false. This is an error, no doubt, but yet not a fallacy in reasoning. In this respect, of conclusive reasoning, most historians have failed, and Macaulay to a certain extent has succeeded.* Mr. Motley, Mr. Carlyle, Mr. Froude, and Mr. Kingsley have extravagantly deified their respective heroes, William the Silent, Oliver Cromwell, Henry the Eighth, and Queen Elizabeth, no matter how black the crimes which are imputed to them. And how does Macaulay act with reference to his hero? He first endeavours to disprove the facts which would militate against his character, and then conclusively reasons the purity of his fame. Take the instance of the massacre of Glencoe. He does not attempt to prove that William was just and merciful in giving the order for the execution; but he endeavours to exculpate William from any knowledge of the purport of the document which he signed.

We must nevertheless repeat what we hinted above, that Macaulay is a partial historian. The style in which he endeavours to impress his opinions upon the reader is very peculiar. We have admitted the logical accuracy of his reasoning, and we cannot attribute all the partial impressions of his history to a mere misrepresentation of historical facts. Though not false, his representations are frequently unjust. With a master hand he paints two portraits, both to a certain extent true, both good likenesses—let one be a Tory, the other a Whig; as a background to the one he supplies that which appears most suitable, to the other he gives the most absurd that the fertility of his genius can devise. He then turns as it were to ask our opinion—pointing out with appa-

rent candour the merits and demerits of both; but in so doing, he hangs up the portrait of the Whig in the dim light of the seventeenth century, and exposes the unfortunate Tory to the bright sunshine of modern development. This is especially true of almost every line which relates to his hero. The light of facts thrown upon him is carefully measured. It enables us to discover the broad deep outlines of his character; but is sufficiently dim to obscure the small touches—the delicate shadings which some say make the man. The broad principles of liberty and Protestantism are quite apparent, but we strain our eyes in vain to discover the little intrigues with relation “to causing an enquiry to be made into the supposed birth of a Prince of Wales,” and his tormenting his wife for being attached to the Church of England. Numbers of little errors of this sort are altogether omitted—and so by this means the purity of William’s character is upheld. While we blame him for many things, we are just as jealous of his fame and character as Lord Macaulay. We look on him as the preserver of the English Constitution. He had great and rare qualifications of quickness and power in action, such as distinguished Louvois, Richelieu, and Chatham, and while he possessed the power of a Louis, he added to it the genius of a Frederick the Great. We cannot leave the subject of Macaulay’s partiality—which is indeed the subject to be discussed in criticising him as an historian—without referring to the most glaring instance in the entire volume. Speaking of the massacre of Glencoe, Dundee is condemned for an “excess of wickedness,” while the Master of Stair merely exhibits “an ill-regulated public spirit,” he is a “very good natured man,” and in committing one of the bloodiest acts which our history records—a horrid brutality worthy of Spanish ferocity—he performs “*a great act of justice, nay of charity.*”

Lord Macaulay’s opinion of what charity is, must be some-

what different from ours, if to outrage every law of hospitality, which even the savage holds sacred ; if to murder unfortunate and helpless wretches, and fling their bodies to the mountain dogs for a repast ; if to be a savage, a brutal, a relentless, murderer ; if this be charity, then truly is it changed from that which “ suffereth long and is kind—seeketh not her own good, and thinketh no evil.”

We cannot conclude our allusions to some few of the salient points in Macaulay’s History without pointing out a flagrant error. Where Macaulay is vituperating the Church of England, and alludes to Cranmer, whose conviction, he tells us, was that there was no difference between a Bishop and a Priest. We wonder whether Macaulay ever took the trouble of perusing Cranmer’s “ *De ordine et ministerio Sacerdotum et Episcoporum.*” Not that we are bigots, or wish to add undue dignity to the sacred lawn ; but we cannot go the whole length with Macaulay. He sees no difference between the skullcap and the mitre ; he considers the Church a monstrosity, a big job, a grand sanctum sanctorum for the sons of Peers, and the brothers of Cabinet ministers. At one time he describes the Clergy as blockheads, or dependants in the houses of the great ; who returned thanks after dinner for a repast of which they had only partaken a small portion themselves,—these, however, were not Clergy at all—only embryo parsons ; much the same however, in his eyes, as the imposition of the Episcopal hands, was merely a form, and could not make even any social difference. He has on many occasions done injustice to the Clergy as a body. We care not to rebut or deny charges brought against individuals ; but if we compare them with the Clergy of any other church, or any other nation, we will see how unjust and absurd it was for Macaulay to speak of them as he has done—as if they were no better than the “ Claude Frollo” of Victor Hugo, “ The Village Curé” of Curier, or the “ Confessors” of M. Michelet.

Although we are not reviewers of Macaulay's History, but of himself, we cannot forbear a remark on his estimate of Cromwell. It is a very old and threadbare subject, so we shall not say very much about it; we must, however, have a word: we must jump into our saddles and break another lance for the King, even though we have the sturdy Scotch veteran to contend against, and he lacks neither the courage nor the stubbornness of the old Roundheads—he is well skilled in lance and sword—we will however try a point or so on this subject. Charles, the black abominable villian, the very worst in this *Biographa Flagitiosa*. His worst crime? He levied taxes without the consent of Parliament. This is Macaulay's charge—the old accusation of every Whig; one would think it was a crime of darkest dye—something that had never been heard of before—

“Something not to be named, my Lord, not to be spoken of;
There is no chastity in language without offence to utter it.”

We have these old charges reiterated against the King, and then the inflated laudations of the Usurper. These are the two great characters of the first portion of the history. These are the heroes until we arrive at William of Orange; one is the angel, the other the devil; one the preserver, the other the destroyer of England; one the Amelia Sedley, the other the Becky Sharp of Macaulay's “Political Vanity Fair three hundred years ago.” He has a fine theme to dilate upon when he speaks of the glory of England in the days of Cromwell; how she struck terror into every nation, and yet feared none herself. Macaulay, with his boundless knowledge of history, should have understood the cause of this. Usurpers must ever be feared by other nations in a manner in which legitimate monarchs never can. They are bound by no law, regulated by no treaties, their caprice is the principle of their action, their ambition the regulator of their conduct. Crom-

well had money also, which Charles had not. Yes! this is the touchstone which Macaulay so studiously avoided. The effort to obtain money without the consent of Parliament cost Charles his head. Macaulay gives a nod of approval to this, and says "deservedly." Cromwell obtained his money—secured it by force of arms, without the consent of Parliament: this is the cause of his fame; with this he won his glory, and purchased his title to praise, with the price of his Sovereign's blood. We do not wish to detract from Oliver's greatness; he was no doubt a great hero. The political atmosphere of England required purification, and this could only be done by some lightning flashes of honest truth—by some thunder-bursts of determined and violent action. Cromwell then was a necessity of the hour; to recognize him as such we are willing, but to deify him as a moral hero is quite another thing. In private and public he is on many accounts entitled to our approbation. We have censured him, or rather Macaulay's estimate of him, but on that account we do not desire altogether to vilify him. In private he indulged no vice; and he ruled the nation on his own responsibility. There was no Barbara Palmer, no Louisa de Querouaille to adorn his court, or indulge his sensuality; there was no Carr, no Villiers to guide him in the closet—no Turenne to lead his armies to victory in the field. He had zealous and powerful lieutenants, no doubt, but they always remained his subordinates. We admit all this, and do not underrate the splendour of his victories. The victories, *per se*, is one thing—their effects quite a different question. We cannot believe that as Blenheim saved Germany, so Marston Moor was the salvation of England. Nor can we believe that Prestonpans was the deliverance of England from a yoke which she abhorred, as Poitiers relieved the Catholic provinces of France. We are not at issue with Macaulay as regards the greatness of Cromwell's genius, or the splendour of his victories; but we ques-

tion the *morale* of his career. Is the king to be vituperated for attempting to accomplish by mild means what Cromwell is lauded for achieving by means twice as virulent and twice as oppressive? The money which Cromwell collected without Parliamentary grant, we admit he did not lavish upon his own private and personal enjoyments; yet, on this score, we cannot give him very much credit or extraordinary praise; though not spent upon his person, yet in rendering his name terrible to Europe, he contributes to his own exaltation and glory. This is, however, scarcely to be dignified as a disinterested accumulation of wealth; it might be so, perhaps, upon the part of a legitimate monarch, if it were all spent upon the protection and enrichment of his country, but in the case of Cromwell, situated as he was and spent as it was, it affords him no claim to be placed in the category of those whose personal frugality was combined with a thorough disinterestedness. Cromwell must not be enrolled with a Pericles or De Witt. This is just the failing of Macaulay's History—this the great error—this the capital crime. He is the champion of one party: that others are opposed to them is quite sufficient to constitute turpitude and villany. We have spoken elsewhere of Macaulay's William the Third, the same error here as in that portion to which we have just referred. We have said "*Macaulay's William the Third*," for the portraiture is not of the William of truth, of history, of fact, no more than the Charlemagne of Ariosto resembled the Charlemagne of Eginhard. This history has been called the "*Grand Historical Novel of Macaulay*;" and no epithet can describe it better, and at the same time draw attention to its defects. If a novel, then not a history—both must be kept perfectly distinct; we like both equally in their proper position: but while we bend the knee to Clio, we must not think that we are worshipping in the temple of Terpsichore. If we look on these volumes in the light of fiction or romance, at least to a

very great degree, we may account, after a certain fashion, for the extent to which Macaulay has carried his hero-colouring.

Madame de Staël has observed that fiction requires a little conventional colouring to make up for its not being true. Macaulay approved of this; and considering the perversion of truth which characterises his volume, he attempted to make up for it by a little conventional colouring. We need not delay to criticise Lord Macaulay's style in his history. It is the same that we had in the Biographies and Essays; the same that told of Hastings and of Clive—and no scene in the History surpasses the superb description of the Trial of Warren Hastings. It was by chance the first of Macaulay's writings that we read, and it has not been eclipsed by anything that we read since: we did not, however, experience the same pleasure, the same gratification, from Macaulay's style (we speak only it will be observed of the *style* in the History) when reading his large work, as we did in the Essays and Biographies. Just as in the Gallery of the Louvre, we had not the same enjoyment in viewing the long, almost endless line of pictures, as we should have had in inspecting them in small and separate groups.

Macaulay's style is too brilliant for History. The perpetual coruscation of his genius for so extended a period is too much for pleasure—it almost changes that pleasure into a task; nevertheless we do not mean to detract from the vigor and brilliancy of writing which his History contains. As we read, some charm seems exercised upon us—we almost forget what we have read elsewhere. We feel anxious to learn the well known fate of Charles; and are desirous of arriving at the result of the contest between William and James. He bestows a reality on the period of which he writes; we become intimate with the worthies of the past: we read the accounts of a division in the house, with the same feeling with which we read of last night's divisions in the "Times" of this morning:

our ears begin to tingle with olden sounds, and our nerves to thrill with antique sensations.

In satire and in wit very many have considered Macaulay to be deficient. He possessed a little wit of a very peculiar kind—"humour," perhaps rather than "wit"—not calculated to convulse with laughter, so much as to provoke a quiet smile, such as we find playing on our lips when we read of the poor literate who bought twopenny-worth of shin of beef, and wiped his greasy fingers on the back of a Newfoundland dog. The want of brilliant sarcasm by no means renders his History tedious. The information is administered in such a state of "rhetorical effervescence," that our interest is sustained, no matter how many faults we may be willing to find.

In all that we have said of Lord Macaulay as an Orator, Poet, Essayist and Historian we do not imagine that we have adequately dealt with the subject, or exhausted our theme; we have endeavoured to point out in each branch, the excellency—the faults—and the peculiar characteristics of his style. We are a Tory reviewer, writing upon the character of a Whig statesman—and a Whig historian, and accordingly we may have been a little biased; we endeavoured "to extenuate nothing, nor aught set down in malice," our task was not however to review his books, and so we did not care to rake up any little historical discrepancies in his writings: such is a poor and paltry method of attack upon a man like Lord Macaulay. At those who, in reviewing his works, have dealt mercilessly with some trivial errors—as to whether a great man dined at three or five o'clock on a certain day—and vague discussions concerning the comparative merits of aspirants to female loveliness—at those, the great literary giant can smile complacently—we might have raked up many errors of authority and fact, had we been reviewing critically after the manner to which we have referred—such would have been an

easy task ; ours was a nobler, and in truth an happier one—
To speak of a great genius—a noble man—

“Who never sold the truth to serve the hour
Or bartered with Eternal God for Power.”

He is dead now—His sun went down ere it was yet day ; another bright star has run its course—fulfilled its destined end—then returned its borrowed lustre unto the Fountain of all Light. He lies in Westminster Abbey, among the departed great ones. Genius we have read is immortal ; could it be that genius is something distinct and separate from mind and matter—something indeed immortal ; and when the body dies the genius is transmitted from age to age, the same genius in different results—the same breath blown through different instruments, so that in each there is a varying sound ? If so, how many who have shared the same genius lie mouldering together in the mighty mausoleum of Westminster. There lies Lord Macaulay, and we need not write his epitaph. “Macaulay” is a grander inscription than any record of his life or of his greatness—a greatness that lives in the convincing eloquence of his Orations—lives in the masculine simplicity of his Lays—lives in the brilliant word-painting of his Essays—lives in the dazzling splendor of his History.



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